

IN THE CLAIMS:

1. (currently amended) A method for managing marketing using a network-based marketing business system including a server coupled to a database in order to measure and manage a development of a relationship between a business and a contact, said method comprising:

creating a unifying framework to manage contact Acquisition, Closing, and Retention as a continuum;

creating consistent contact relationship metrics across the unifying framework to measure progress in relationship development;

establishing a deliberate, systematic process using the unifying framework and metrics to develop relationships and execute strategy, wherein the framework, metrics, and process are stored in the database on the server;

creating and storing a plurality of contact relationship levels representative of a customer lifecycle for the framework within the database, wherein each contact relationship level is assigned to at least one of a plurality of marketing phase phases including Acquisition, Closing, and Retention;

anticipating in advance and populating the database with ~~which~~ of a plurality of potential interactions between the business and the contact is necessary within each contact relationship level to execute a chosen predetermined strategy to develop the relationship between the business and the contact;

predefining and storing in the database ~~which~~ of at least one trigger interaction within the plurality of potential interactions enable that enables movement of the contact from a first contact relationship level of the plurality of contact relationship levels to a second relationship level of the plurality of relationship levels and from a first marketing phase to a second marketing phase;

assigning and storing in the database a predetermined relative interaction value based on an anticipated relative impact and relationship enhancement capabilities of each of the plurality of potential interactions between the business and the contact, the relative interaction value serving as a basis of measuring interaction effectiveness and that relates to progress in developing [[a]] the relationship between [[a]] the business and each the contact of a plurality of contacts and a variable cost to each of a plurality of potential interactions between the business and each contact of the plurality of contacts;

assigning and storing in the database a predetermined variable cost to each of the plurality of potential interactions between the business and the contact;

measuring progress in relationship development for the contact within each contact relationship level by receiving over a network and recording the consistent contact relationship metrics of interactions, relative interaction value, and interaction variable cost associated with each actual interaction between the business and each the contact of the plurality of contacts in an ongoing interaction record stored in the database on the server, wherein each actual interaction the plurality of potential interactions having has an associated relative interaction value and variable cost;

developing a data stream for each contact of the plurality of contacts, wherein the data stream tracks a cause and effect relationship between the recorded actual interactions, the corresponding relative interaction value of each recorded actual interaction, the corresponding variable cost of each recorded actual interaction;

continually assigning each the contact of the plurality of contacts to a contact relationship level of the plurality of contact relationship levels as each actual interaction is recorded in the database on the server such that the assigned contact relationship level remains the same until the predefined definition of the at least one trigger interaction required for movement of the contact between contact relationship levels occurs; and

continually updating in the database on the server a cumulative relative interaction value and cumulative variable interaction cost for the contact as each actual interaction

occurs within the assigned contact relationship level based on the relative interaction value and variable cost associated with each actual interaction;

developing an operational data stream in the database on the server for the contact, wherein the data stream tracks a cause and effect relationship between the recorded actual interactions and the corresponding relative interaction value of each recorded actual interaction and tracks the variable cost of each recorded actual interaction;

running a computer-generated ~~generating~~ summary report for each ~~the~~ contact of the plurality of ~~contacts~~, the summary report based on the data stream for each ~~the~~ contact and ~~transmitted by the server for display on a client system, wherein the report includes operational interaction flow summaries and patterns; and~~

based on the report, making real-time day-to-day decisions and process improvements and analyzing and producing long-term planning by aggregating and correlating the operational interaction flow summaries and patterns with data acquired from other decision support systems and transaction processing systems.

2. (canceled)

3. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising modeling alternative strategies in advance of investment, wherein modeling alternative strategies comprises:

anticipating potential interactions, fixed costs associated with each potential interaction, and variable costs associated with each potential interaction, the potential interactions being necessary to carry out the alternative strategies through each of the plurality of marketing phases;

running reports for each alternative strategy based on status quo, best case scenario, and worst case scenario;

selecting a best new planned strategy;

configuring [[a]] an operational relationship tracking system by populating the database with the anticipated potential interactions necessary to carry out to track an implementation of the selected best new planned strategy as a continuum through the plurality of marketing phases and through the plurality of contact relationship levels within each marketing phase such that all potential interactions and the associated relative interaction values and variable costs of each interaction are available to be selected by the operator of the system for the interaction record when the system is operational; and

linking planning to operational execution by systematically tracking actual results in executing the selected best new planned strategy by receiving over the network and recording in the database on the server consistent contact relationship metrics within the framework in an ongoing interaction record, wherein each actual interaction has an associated relative interaction value and variable cost and wherein the interactions, the relative interaction values, and the variable costs each constitute a data stream of contact relationship metrics; and

updating strategy decision models with actual operational variable cost data from a computer-generated summary report to replace estimates.

4.-27. (canceled)

28. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising ~~receiving contact information and storing the contact information to create a contact profile~~ and cross-referencing the received contact profile information against a unique identifier for easy retrieval and update in the database on the server, wherein the contact information includes the ongoing interaction record.

29. (canceled)

30. (canceled)

31. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising running computer-generated reports and displaying the reports on the client system that help management improve upon a marketing strategy to reduce risk and maximize profits by

linking planning to operational execution by systematically tracking actual results in  
exccuting a selected best new planned strategy.

32. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising running a computer-generated detailed history of past interactions, current interactions, and planned interactions.

33. (canceled)

34. (canceled)

35. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 1, wherein recording each actual interaction between the business and ~~each~~ the contact ~~of the plurality of contacts~~ comprises receiving over the network and automatically recording each actual interaction in the ongoing interaction record in real time in the database on the server, wherein each actual interaction is initiated by at least one of the business, a contact of the plurality of contacts, and an automatic computer-generated trigger based on one of a previous actual interaction and an integrated market action plan.

36. (currently amended) A method in accordance with ~~Claim 33~~ Claim 1, wherein assigning ~~each~~ the contact ~~of the plurality of contacts~~ to a contact relationship level of the plurality of contact relationship levels as each actual interaction is received over the network and recorded comprises assigning ~~each~~ the contact to a contact relationship level based on which potential interactions of the plurality of potential interactions keep the contact assigned to the same contact relationship level and which of at least one trigger interaction are predetermined ~~determined~~ to be necessary to move ~~each~~ the contact from the first contact relationship level of the plurality of contact relationship levels to the second relationship level of the plurality of contact relationship levels and ~~which potential interactions are determined to be necessary to move each the contact~~ from a ~~the~~ first marketing phase to a ~~the~~ second marketing phase.

37. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 1 further comprising aggregating in the database on the server, as part of a data stream for a particular contact,

each actual interaction between the business and the particular contact to determine an interaction flow between the business and the particular contact within each contact relationship level of the plurality of contact relationship levels and within the at least one marketing phase, wherein the data stream for the particular contact includes a relative interaction value of each actual interaction between the business and the particular contact and a variable cost of each actual interaction between the business and the particular contact.

38. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 37 further comprising aggregating the data stream in the database on the server associated with ~~each~~ the contact of ~~the plurality of contacts~~ into the data stream of all contacts of ~~the~~ a plurality of contacts to determine an interaction flow between the business and the plurality of contacts within each contact relationship level of the plurality of contact relationship levels and within the at least one marketing phase.

39. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 38 further comprising running a computer-generated ~~generating a~~ summary report for the plurality of contacts, the summary report based on the aggregate data stream of the plurality of contacts, and displaying the summary report on the client system.

40. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 39 further comprising comparing the data stream for each contact of the plurality of contacts and the computer-generated summary report generated for each contact to the aggregate data stream of the plurality of contacts and the computer-generated summary report generated for the plurality of contacts to facilitate guiding decisions and process improvements relating to relationship development between the business and each contact of the plurality of contacts in real time.

41. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 38 further comprising:

determining a computer-generated ~~an~~ aggregate relative interaction value for the plurality of contacts; and

correlating the aggregate relative interaction value with at least one of business profits, customer satisfaction, and other key performance indicators of the business, wherein

the aggregate relative interaction value is a leading indicator of business profits, customer satisfaction, and other key performance indicators of the business.

42. (currently amended) A method in accordance with Claim 38 further comprising:

using the a computer-generated aggregated data stream to facilitate iterative improvement of business performance; and

adjusting predetermined relative interaction values to reflect new values suggested from results obtained from a relationship tracking system.